

DIVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE BLIND  
BOARD MEETING MINUTES  
MARCH 12, 2005

**DSB BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT**

John Barnett  
Searcy Ewell  
Lindi Johnson  
Nola McKinney

**EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS PRESENT**

Pierre Curry  
Buddy Spivey

**DSB BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT**

Jim Adams  
Maria Morais  
Sharon Berry

**EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS ABSENT**

Beth Bourgeois (resigned due to hire 2/05)  
Jim Hill  
Ramona Sangalli

DHS Representative: Janie Huddleston

Attorney General's Office Representative: None

Governor's Office Representative: None

DSB Staff Present: Jim Hudson, Katy Morris, Coral Virden, Jim Pearson, Donna Birdwell, Lyndel Lybarger, Kara Mahan, Mary Cabaniss, Charlie Cain-Davis, Carolyn Holbrook, Dorothy Brooks, Kimberly Stanfield

**CALL TO ORDER.** Chairman Lindi Johnson called the meeting to order. Mrs. Johnson informed the board that board member Maria Morais, representing NFB, had notified the board that she would be unable to continue serving on the board. Mrs. Morais' term expires in June 2005. Chairman Johnson also noted that board member Jim Adams had surgery recently and is doing well.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA.** Motion was made by Mrs. Nola McKinney to approve the agenda. Mr. John Barnett seconded the motion. ***Motion passed.***

**INTRODUCTIONS.** All persons in attendance introduced themselves.

**APPROVAL OF 12/11/04 MINUTES.** Motion was made by Mr. Barnett to approve the minutes. Mr. Searcy Ewell seconded the motion. ***Motion passed.***

**DSB DIRECTOR'S REPORT -**

JoAnne Wilson, the Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration resigned, effective March 1, 2005. Ms. Wilson has been a tremendous RSA Commissioner and advocate for blind people in the Rehab program. The Interim Commissioner is Troy Justesen.

Congress is currently considering HR 27, which negatively impacts state rehab agencies, especially those serving persons who are blind. The legislation downgrades the status of the RSA Commissioner position (currently appointed by the President) to that of a Director reporting to the Secretary of Education. HR 27 also contains a clause, which allows state governors to divert rehab funds to Workforce Centers for expansion of their infrastructures. Currently, the Centers do not facilitate job search and placement for blind persons, because of 1) the absence of specialized services and specially trained staff, and 2) the fact that it is far more difficult and costly to locate or develop jobs for blind people than for the general population. Blind persons who approach the Centers for assistance with jobs are automatically referred to DSB. Otherwise we, the blind, end up the last priority.

A second major concern on the national level is the planned elimination of all RSA regional offices by October 1, 2005. The regional offices of the Rehabilitation Services Administration monitor the quantity and quality of rehab services and provide technical assistance to the state rehab agencies. The federal Department of Education, which oversees RSA, contends that the RSA national office in Washington can perform the same services previously available through RSA regional offices.

At the state level, the general assembly is midway through the legislative session and we are watching numerous bills affecting DSB. Senate Bill 1050 threatens to water down existing progressive legislation by reducing the effort level required of state agencies in providing access to technology for persons who are blind. House Bill 1734 mandates early vision screening for children and could result in reduced services donated to DSB by Ophthalmologists. However, catching vision problems early in children could logically reduce the level of services needed from DSB later. Senate Bill 556 merges Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS) with the Department of Workforce Education. We are watching the bill to ensure it does not have any secondary impact on DSB. House Bill 2748 on Voting requires a print record of electronic voting. Independent access to the print record by persons who are blind is not addressed.

MEDICAID WAIVER - DSB is still pursuing this funding source as a supplement to other federal and state funds for Rehab Teaching services to blind individuals at risk of institutionalization. Meanwhile, the waiting list for such services is running anywhere from eighty to ninety a month. These are folks we cannot add to our caseloads because of the reduction in funding and the reduced number of full time Rehab Teachers.

Helen Cunningham, Rehabilitation Counselor in the Texarkana office, retired after 35 years of service. Kara Mahan, Field Supervisor, is in the process of filling this position, along with a Rehabilitation Assistant vacancy in Pine Bluff.

**JUMPSTART-** The Jumpstart Program will run June 12, 2005 through July 1, 2005. We have already received 12 or 13 applications. The program prepares blind students and young adults for the world of work or higher education by giving them real-life experience in independent living and a brief summer job.

Ginny McWilliams has been hired full time as the DSB Case Reviewer. She will monitor and audit consumer cases on a daily basis. She is certified in both Rehabilitation Teaching and Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling.

**CLIENT SATISFACTION SURVEY -** Mississippi State University has indicated it may be interested in conducting a client satisfaction/needs assessment survey of both Older Blind and Voc Rehab for DSB. Donna Birdwell will contact the members of the board committee on Client Satisfaction Survey to see if MSU can meet the criteria required in the committee's report on the subject. MSU indicates there will be no cost to the agency and such a survey would be expected next year.

**VENDING FACILITY PROGRAM -** Jim Pearson, DSB Administrator for Business & Technology, reported that the Federal building basement is undergoing a major renovation that will accommodate a new cafeteria. The federal government is contributing about \$600,000 and the Vending Program will add \$80,000. The facility will serve all the federal employees in the complex and the new court house system beginning in July or August. Additionally, tourist information centers are either open or scheduled soon for Texarkana and the Ft. Smith/Van Buren area. The centers have internet access and information for all types of tourism. Other existing highway facilities are planned for update throughout the state.

#### END OF DIRECTOR'S REPORT

**BIENNIAL BUDGET -** Mary Cabaniss, DSB Chief Fiscal Officer, reported that the DSB appropriation bill was currently under legislative consideration for authorized expenditures in the coming two-year period. The budget being considered is virtually the same as last year, other than a small cost of living increase and a 30% (\$9,000) decrease in conference fees and travel mandated by the legislature.

**DSB EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR COMMITTEE -** Chairman Johnson appointed the DSB 2005 Employee of the Year Committee consisting of Mr. Barnett, Mr. Ewell, Mr. Adams and Mr. Curry. Mr. Barnett will serve as committee chairman and will announce the names of the winning employees for 2005 at the June board meeting.

**DISABILITY RIGHTS CENTER REPORT (DRC) -** Mr. Eddie Miller echoed Mr. Hudson's concerns about HR27 being considered currently in Congress. The disability community definitely does not want to see Rehab in Workforce. DRC staff visit One-

Stop Centers in Arkansas at least once every other week. When a person with a disability comes in, the first thing they do is transfer them to a rehab counselor. The centers are not staffed with people trained and certified to serve people with disabilities. On the voting issue, DRC has a specific program that deals with access to voting. If you have any concerns regarding voting access or any other issues, please contact the Disability Rights Center's toll free number at 1-800-482-1174. The local number is 501-296-1775.

**ARKANSAS INDEPENDENT LIVING COUNCIL REPORT (AILC)** – No representative was present. A report was submitted with the board packet.

**CONSUMER INPUT** – Mrs. Nola McKinney represented the Arkansas Council of the Blind at the ACB combined President and Legislative Conferences in Washington D.C. recently. Some of the issues discussed were the Rehabilitation Act, Randolph Sheppard Act, Highway Pedestrian Bill, and Audio Description Bill. ACB National was also involved with Universal Studios recently in developing the first DVD with audio description for the movie "Ray". The movie can be bought online at Walmart for \$14.95. The Arkansas Council of the Blind State convention will be held April 29 -30, 2005 at the LaQuinta Inn on Interstate 30 in Little Rock.

Four representatives from the National Federation of the Blind of Arkansas also visited Washington, D.C. recently to take part in legislative discussions and make known their concerns.

The Veterans Administration is building their twelfth blind rehab center in Biloxi, Mississippi. There are centers in Waco, Texas; Birmingham, Alabama; Augusta, Georgia, Long Beach, California; Palo Alto, California; and Tucson, Arizona.

**Schedule of Next Meeting** - June 11, 2005 at the Donaghey Plaza South Building, 700 Main Street, First floor Conference Rooms A & B at 10:00 a.m.

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Nola McKinney  
Secretary